DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 691 SO 010 021

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TITLE Education and Occupational Decisions: The Careers of the Children of Immigrants in Rome, New York, 1910 to 1940 (CTQ).
PUB DATE Apr 77
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, New York, April 3-8, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Change; *Career Choice; *Comparative Analysis; Data Analysis; *Educational Background; Elementary Secondary Education; *Ethnic Groups; *Immigrants; Models; Occupational Mobility; Polish Americans; Research Methodology; Status; Tables (Data)
IDENTIFIERS Italians

ABSTRACT

omplete career patterns for a sample of immigrant men were studie. to determine what factors influenced occupational decisions and the type and status of the jobs which the men obtained. A sample of 202 Polish, Italian, and other immigrant men in Rome, New York, provided three groups for comparison. Residential and occupational information were obtained from city directories and school attendance records of their children. Occupational titles were standardized into four categories: unskilled; operator, clerical and sales; craftsmen and foremen; and professional and managerial. Data indicate significant residential segregation by ethnic group; none of the immigrant fathers held professional jobs, although small percentages were store managers; Italian children remained in school for the shortest amount of time, yet obtained higher job status than did Poles; and career growth often came through midcareer job changes. These findings suggest that traditional career education job models, which show a long period of development in one job, are not appropriate for immigrant children. Also, additional scholarship funds should be available for adults to return to school for further training or education. (Author/AV)

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Education and Occupational Decisions: The Careers of the Children of Immigrants in Rome, New York, 1910 to 1940 (CTQ)

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In the first three decades of the twentieth century, immigrants came in increasing numbers to the urban areas of upstate New York. This wave of immigration was certainly not the first to arrive in this area. English, Dutch, German, Scandinavian, French-Canadian and Irish immigrants preceded the Italian and Polish immigration of the early 1900's. However the new immigrants, as they were called, encountered an entirely different situation than that which existed for their predecessors. A decaying urban setting, reflecting growing physical ugliness, moral and social degeneration, and frightening anonymity were blamed on the unassimilated, illiterate and sometimes anarchistic immigrant. In addition, changes in education, business and politics, characteristic of the Progressive Era's search for order, alienated the foreigner, hindered him from establishing political control over his local neighborhood, and cut off traditional avenues of mobility. It was in this hostile setting that the first generation of Italian and Polish Americans increased their social status.

The social environment of the urban immigrant consisted of three interrelated areas, the family, school and work. The relationships among family, school and work were explored in this research in three separate phases. In the first part, the writer collected data on occupations and education for two groups of recent European immigrants, the Italians and the Poles, and compared this information to similar data obtained for the previous

settlers of the community. Both the Polish and Italian immigrants had similar European backgrounds and American experiences. The second phase of the project was a careful search for differences in the environment, schooling and careers between these two immigrant groups. This survey revealed differences between the Polish and Italian immigrants which suggested that economic success for minority groups may be obtained because of decisions made during the adult years. These decisions produced changes in occupation during midcareer years and motivation to return to continuing education programs.

Methodology

A sample of 202 men was drawn from the historical sources in the city of Rome, New York. Information relating to ethnicity, father's occupation, residence, age, education and career patterns was collected for each person. The major sources for data relating to family and education were school records from 1914 to 1930. City directories provided residential and occupational information. The links between these two were the name of the father and the child and the current address. In order for a case to be included in the sample, the following requirements had to be met: 1) the child had to appear in the school records; 2) the father had to be identifiable by name and address in the city directory for that year and every year after that until the child was listed in the directory; and 3)the child had to be listed in the directory as an adult. Often the child was still living at home when he started working so the

address was an additional identification factor. A search was made through the entire set of directories to determine if another person with the same name appeared. If there was any suspicion of ambiguity, the case was deleted from the sample.

The attendance registers of the Rome City School from 1914 to 1928 were examined. Each name in the register was checked against the names included in the sample and against a list of names that had already been eliminated from previous searches in the city directories. Two or three names were then picked at random from the remaining names.

Two sources of bias, which could not be controlled, can be found in this experiment. The first possible bias was that the people who remained in Rome long enough to be included in the sample were significantly different with respect to careers and education than those who migrated. The second bias was due to the fact that certain names were impossible to trace because they were so common or they were so odd that they could not be recognized because of spelling errors. A spot check during the research revealed that 35% of the Italian names, 6% of the Polish names, and 15% of the remaining names taken from the school attendance registers could be followed through their adult career. The only comparisons between those included and those eliminated from the sample are a measure of the father's occupational status, using Duncan's Socio-economic Index, and the type of occupation in which the father worked. There was no significant differences at the .05 level for

these two variables between those included and those excluded from the sample.

Two sources of information were used in determining the ethnicity of the person from his name. Elsdon C. Smith's Dictionary of American Family Names*[1] was used to classify as many of the names in the sample as could be found in the book. The remainder of the names were submitted to three independent judges from the Polish and Italian communities of Rome who were able to classify the names because of their familiarity with the people involved.

In addition to the main research sample, interviews were arranged with people in Oneida county who could have been included in the research sample if they had happened to be selected from the Rome school records. Interviews were conducted with the idea that the data which they yielded would be supportative of the main research findings rather than a central focus of study.

The interviews were informal. Key questions were posed at various points in the interview. These questions were rarely addressed by the person interviewed, but they did serve to guide the discussion or to bring the conversation back to the subject at hand. The interviewee was permitted to talk freely while the researcher noted the mention of incidents or ideas that fitted into preconceived patterns. These patterns had been formulated on information gathered from three sources: 1) literature on immigration, 2) information from members of the local community, and 3) the

1. Smith, Elsdon C. Dictionary of American Family Names (New York 1956)

analysis of the data from school records and city directories.

Data

The cases in the sample were split into three categories, Italian, Polish and a miscellaneous group. The distribution of the sample among these was as follows: Italian 82 (41%), Polish 35 (17%), and Other 85 (42%). This latter group contained people having names which showed the following descent: British 48 (56%); German 16 (19%); all other nationalities 21 (25%). The judges who classified the names according to ethnicity confirmed that both the Italian and Polish subgroups were made up entirely of Roman Catholics.

The most striking characteristic of immigrant life was the extent of residential segregation. The ethnic neighborhood was a source of stability for the European immigrants, but it hindered their children's efforts to become integrated in the mainstream of American life and share its rewards. The Italian and Polish experience in Rome reinforced this pattern of residential segregation. For the purposes of this study, residence was defined as the elementary school district in which the family lived. The Italian children were concentrated in the East Rome school while the Polish children attended Willett school. The other children were distributed among three school districts: Barringer, Thomas and Jay. The Jay street school district was the most segregated.

Viewing the chart on the next page from another perspective

one notes that the Italian families made up 89% of their neighborhood, while the Polish families only comprised a little more than half (64%). This suggests that the Italians were more effectively isolated than the Poles.

TABLE A

Ethnicity School

	Barringer	East Rome	Jay	Thomas	Willett
Italian	3 3.7%	71 86.6%	0	3 3.7%	5 6.7%
Polish	8 22.9%	2 5.7%	0	4 11.4%	25 60.0%
Other	29 34.1%	7 8.2%	14 16%	26 30.6%	9 10.6%
Total	40 20%	80 40%	14 7%	33 11%	35 17%

The occupational information was derived from job titles in the city directory. The job titles were each assigned a measure of status using Otis Dudley Duncan's Socioeconomic Index for all occupations (SEI)*[2] They were also classified into four categories of occupational types: 1) service and unskilled jobs; 2) operator, clerical and sales occupations; 3) craftsmen and foremen; and 4) professional, managers and proprietors.

The first set of occupational information pertains to the job of the father. Characteristics associated with the father's occupation are usually the best, although not infallible predictors of a son's occupational success. All the fathers in the sample had a stable occupational status; i.e. no major job changes occurred during the period studied. The average value of Duncan's SEI for

2. Reiss, Albert J. Occupations and Social Status (New York 1961)

TABLE B Mean SEI of the Father's Occupation

Ethnicity	Father's Occupation		
	Mean	SD	N
Italian	18.9	16.6	82
Polish	20.1	18.2	35
Other	37.8	22.2	85
Total	27.1	21.5	202

the three groups are given in Table B above. The fathers in both the Italian and Polish groups had an average SEI which was significantly lower than the average SEI of the third group. The Polish group shows a slightly higher mean SEI than the Italians.

Differences within the distribution of the job titles among the four categories of occupational type reinforce the pattern found above. The jobs of the fathers in the Italian and Polish families were heavily concentrated in the service-unskilled category. The Other group was more evenly distributed with the plurality in the managerial, proprietor and professional categories.

TABLE C

Father's Occupational Type

Ethnicity	Service Unskilled	Operator Clerical Sales	Craftsmen Foremen	Managers Proprietor Professional
Italian	51 62.0%	3 3.7%	7 8.5%	21 25.6%
Polish	19 54.3%	4 11.4%	6 17.1%	6 17.1%
Other	12 14.1%	22 25.9%	20 23.5%	31 36.5%
Total	82 41%	29 14%	33 16%	58 29%

The last group, managers, proprietors and professionals can be analyzed to yield further information. The numbers which result

TABLE D

Father's Occupational Type

Ethnicity	Managers, Proprietors	Professionals
Italian	21	0
Polish	6	0
Other	26	5
Total	53	5

from the separation of the professional from the other two groups are reproduced in Table D above. This data demonstrates that none of the immigrants followed a profession. The large number of Italian and Polish fathers who appeared in this category were for the most part owners or managers of small stores within the ethnic community.

The differences between the immigrant groups and the Other group with regard to the father's occupation are clear, but a closer examination reveals differences between the Italian and Polish groups. The mean SEI's of the father's occupation for the two groups are virtually the same, with the Polish fathers only slightly ahead. The two groups of immigrant fathers have dissimilar distributions of job titles according to occupational type. The Italians do have a somewhat broader base in the small business area, but the Polish fathers have been more successful in infiltrating into the operator, clerical, sales, craftsmen and foremen positions. Again it appears that the Polish subgroup has a slight edge over the Italians.

The major variable connected with education was the number of

years of school completed by the child. The length of schooling is a better predictor of occupational status than any other aspect of education.

The length of schooling for the sample was operationally defined as the last year the boy was recorded in the school attendance registers if his parents were still listed in the city directory the next year. The Rome City directories also recorded information about students over the age of eighteen whose parents were residents. Fortunately, this made it possible to assign a specific number of years of schooling to everyone in the sample. There was no ambiguity in the assignment of the number of years of schooling for any of the cases who went to school after high school.

The mean length of schooling for the sample was 8.748 years and the standard deviation was 3.156 years. The range was 17 years, from third grade to professional degrees. A grade school education was obtained by 115 of the males, 73 more reached the high school level, while 31 of that number graduated. 12 more of the sample reached college, 10 of whom graduated. Two additional people took advanced degrees.

The average attainment of years of schooling for each of the groups is given in the table on the next page. The Italian children stayed in school for the shortest amount of time, while the Other group remained in school the longest. When the Italian and Polish sample is combined, the difference between the immigrants and the

Other group's mean length of schooling is significant at the .05 level, even though it is less than one year. The Polish group again does slightly better than the Italian group with regard to the length of schooling.

TABLE E

Years of Schooling

Ethnicity	Mean	SD	N
Italian	8.24	3.37	82
Polish	8.66	2.95	35
Other	9.27	2.96	85
Italian/ Polish	8.37	3.25	117
Other	9.27	2.96	85

The job titles of the first job recorded in the city directory for each case were coded for occupational status and the type of job. This set of data was labled "career entry occupations". The first job was often used to measure the effectiveness of educational programs, but was not always logically related to the rest of the career. It was usually a period of experimentation for both the employer and the employee. The career entry job indicated the effects of family background and schooling much more strongly than later jobs.

The pattern observed earlier was still present; however the differences had diminished to the point where they were not significant at the .05 level. The Polish group was slightly ahead of the Italians, while both were still behind the Other group.

TABLE F

Career Entry Jobs

	SEI		
Ethnicity	Mean	SD	N
Italian	24.0	22.8	82
Polish	25.7	22.5	35
Other	30.7	20.9	85

The types of occupations for the career entry jobs demonstrate unequal beginnings in the world of work for the children of immigrants as compared to the children of the Other group. Approximately half of the children of the immigrant groups had to start out in the service and unskilled categories, while over 40% of the Other group started out in the operator, clerical and sales jobs. The Polish group had a slightly larger percentage of people who were able to start their careers outside the unskilled service type of jobs than the Italians.

TABLE G

Occupational Type of Career Entry Job

Ethnicity	Service Unskilled		Operator Clerical Sales		Craftsmen Foremen		Managers Proprietor Professional	
Italian	48	58.5%	18	22.0%	3	3.7%	13	15.9%
Polish	17	48.6%	7	20.0%	6	17.1%	5	14.3%
Other	29	34.1%	37	43.5%	11	12.8%	8	9.4%
Total	94	46%	62	31%	20	10%	26	12%

Data on all the jobs which the son held was sought, but complete

career patterns could not be obtained for the entire sample. The Rome City directories noted the death of a head of household, unemployment or army service, so that it may be assumed that those who disappeared from the directories moved away or went to prison. It would be useful to know if the cases with missing career data were significantly different from those cases with complete career patterns. The variable "length of schooling" was chosen for comparison. The following table summarized the data. No significant difference at the .05 level was found between the two groups.

TABLE H

Comparison - Years of School Attended between Groups with Complete and with Missing Career Data

Career Data	Years of School Attended		
	Mean	SD	N
Incomplete	8.54	2.90	33
Complete	8.27	4.36	169
Total	8.75	3.16	202

The final set of occupational information was the job with the highest recorded SEI. This was the central measure of success in this project. The majority of the sample held this job during the middle or later years of the career. In three groups in the sample, however, the career entry SEI was also the highest SEI. Those cases in which the son remained in the same job for his entire career, would show no change in the SEI. A second group

contained people who moved up a career ladder in an organization. The job categories in Duncan's SEI were not sufficiently precise to record any of the actual changes in status. The third group moved within a wide variety of clerical and sales occupations or between semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. The changes in the SEI over the career were small and the first occupation just happened to be the highest. Only two cases of genuine backsliding from the white-collar jobs to the blue-collar were found in the sample. None of these groups significantly undermined the consideration of the highest SEI obtained by each of the groups as a measure of economic and social success.

The data obtained divulged a dramatic shift from the previous patterns. The Italians were able to attain status near the level of the Other group, while the Poles made little improvement over their career entry level. This difference was significant at the .05 level.

TABLE I

Occupation with the Highest SEI

	SEI		
Ethnicity	Mean	SD	N
Italian	41.4	20.3	68
Polish	32.9	19.5	30
Other	45.9	21.6	71

The table below presents the summary of information on occupational type for the jobs with the highest SEI. While the Other

group is concentrated in the operator, clerical and sales positions, the Italians are fairly evenly distributed throughout the categories. Although there are no significant differences, the Poles have a much higher concentration of people in the service - unskilled category and a lower percentage in the managers, proprietors and professional category than the Italian and the Other groups.

TABLE J

Occupational Type of the Job with the Highest SEI

Ethnicity	Service Unskilled	Operator Clerical Sales	Craftsmen Foremen	Managers Proprietors Professional
Italian	7 10.3%	19 27.9%	16 23.5%	26 38.2%
Polish	6 20.0%	11 36.7%	6 20.0%	7 23.3%
Other	6 8.5%	30 42.3%	11 15.5%	24 33.8%

The data on the ethnic group reveals not only differences between the immigrant groups and the other sample but also between the Italian and Polish groups. These latter groups started far behind the Other group in regard to residence, to father's occupation, and to education and career entry jobs. The Poles did seem to have a slight advantage over the Italians at this point, but they were far behind the Other group. In the adult careers, the familiar pattern changed. The Italians made rapid gains so that their status and occupational distributions were nearly identical with the Other group. The Polish group was unable to make such progress and improved only slightly over their initial entry into the work world.

A study on a limited sample in a small city cannot claim to

be representative of a national trend or support a proposition that the children of Italian immigrants always were much more successful than the children of Polish immigrants. It is nevertheless interesting to examine the differences in the careers of these two groups to understand how one minority group could make such tremendous gains in status while the second minority group remained at the same level.

The occupational patterns of everyone in the sample were studied and then placed into one of three categories: 1) remaining in the same job; 2) climbing a career ladder; and 3) indiscriminately changing from job to job. Staying within the same job does not necessarily imply unskilled work. Professionals have what is called terminal status because they usually remain at the same jobs for their entire careers.

TABLE K

Career Type

Ethnicity	Same Job		Career Ladder		Change	
Italian	13	21.0%	27	43.5%	22	35.5%
Polish	14	50.0%	4	14.3%	10	35.7%
Other	20	29.4%	25	36.8%	23	33.8%

The majority of the Polish sample remained in the same job, while a smaller group changed jobs indiscriminately. Very few Polish men were able to gain positions involving a career ladder. This distribution of the Polish sample members among the three career

types gives a clue to their inability to achieve the positions of status which the other two groups obtained.

The Italians managed to make good use of positions with promotion ladders, placing nearly 44% of their group in this category, the largest percentage of any group. The Italians were also more likely to jump indiscriminately from job to job than to remain in the same job for their entire career.

The Other group had an even distribution among these three career types. A greater percentage of this group than of the Italian group remained in the same job, but this percentage was much lower than the Polish group. The largest section of the group advanced along a career ladder, but a significant number also jumped from job to job.

From the above discussion, it appears that it would be advantageous to explore the relationship between career type and the highest SEI obtained for each case. The chart on the top of the next page gives the average SEI obtained for each career type and ethnic group.

There is little difference in the average of the highest SEI's obtained for those remaining in the same job. It should be noted that the Polish group which is concentrated in this category had the lowest average of the three ethnic groups and that the averages of this career type were the lowest of all three types.

As would be expected, the career ladder category produced the

TABLE L

The Highest SEI By Career Type and Ethnicity

Career Type	Ethnicity	Highest SEI		
		Mean	SD	N
Same Job	Italian	30.0	23.0	13
	Polish	29.3	24.9	14
	Other	33.4	20.0	20
Career Ladder	Italian	49.9	17.6	27
	Polish	39.8	5.3	4
	Other	56.0	21.0	25
Change	Italian	42.8	15.1	22
	Polish	35.7	15.5	10
	Other	45.1	18.4	23

highest averages. If Duncan's SEI scale had been more precise, one would have seen even higher averages. The surprise is the low mean of the Polish group, but because of the small number involved, not much can be concluded from this. The Other group best used the career ladder to its advantage, while the Italians were not toofar behind.

Jumping from job to job appears to have paid off in status for every group in comparison with remaining in the same job for the entire career. However, a strong difference emerges between the Polish group and the other two groups. The Polish do not seem to have been able to capitalize on job changes to improve their status to the extent that the Italians and the Other group did.

The interview data supports the contention that the major occupational changes took place during the adult years. An unexpected finding was that eleven out of the fifteen people interviewed availed themselves of the opportunity of going back to school after they entered the work world. These people went back in both degree and non-degree programs; many took short courses that would enable them to qualify for a particular job such as an insurance broker or police officer. Of the four who did not go back, two were priests. It is likely that they also have continued their studies in pursuit of their vocation. The reinvestment in education as an adult appears to have opened job opportunities not in a direct line with their previous occupations.

This research demonstrates that the decisions which were beneficial in raising the status of the minority groups in the sample took place during the adult years. Two important factors in the immigrants' success were judicious changes in occupation and the willingness to participate in continuing education programs. These results lead to a reexamination of two related aspects of the public school system. The first concerns the career models which are the bases for the vocational and career education programs. The second problem is the determination of the point in the school system at which monies for equalizing economic opportunities would be most effective.

Both career and vocational education programs employ a standard career model as the base of their curriculum. This career model is

outlined in J. F. Thompson's Foundation of Vocational Education*[3] This book contains several similar models, each emphasizing a different aspect of the vocational development process. The central model based on five life stages and several substages is presented below. Thompson and other vocational educators agree that a primary function of an integrated career education program is to enable an individual to progress smoothly through these stages at the appropriate times in his life.

Vocational Development as a Process

Five Life Stages and Substages

Growth Stages (Birth to 14 years)
- Fantasy (4-10)
- Interest (11)
- Capacity (13-14)

Exploration Stages (15-24)
- Tentative (15-17)
- Transition (18-21)
- Trial (22-24)

Establishment Stages (25-44)
- Trial (25-30) (within one occupation)
- Advancement (31-44)

Maintenance Stage (43-64)

Decline Stages (65 on)
- Deceleration (65-70)
- Retirement (70 on)

Thirty-five percent of the sample followed this career pattern and generally succeeded in terms of status. The model

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3. Thompson, J. F. Foundations of Vocational Education Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 1973)

is however unrepresentative of the career patterns of the majority of the people in the sample. Many jobs simply do not lend themselves to a long developmental process. Those people who do not manage to gain an entry position on a career ladder have no need to despair, because they can still attain higher status positions by other means.

In the model, the emphasis is on youthful development. All the major occupational decisions are made by the age of twenty-five. The stages after twenty-five are concentrated on advancement or maintenance within one occupation. A sizeable number of the research sample and of the interview sample continued to make radical job changes much later than this. The changes often increased their status and rarely diminished it.

The model is too structured or rigid to accomodate the opportunities available in the occupational structure of this country. The model provides no points of exit or reentry into one occupation, for those who must leave for military service or to raise children. Mid-career changes in occupation, reinvestment in education or retirement careers cannot be fit into this vocational development process. Diversity has always been charactersitic of American life, but it is especially important in the economic substructure of American society to insure that people from a wide range of backgrounds and capabilities have the opportunity to compete for the distribution of economic rewards.

One of the goals of the public school system in the United

States is to provide equality of educational opportunity. Many definitions of equality exist, but the one that is of interest here is the equalizing of educational outcomes among a wide variety of students, including disadvantaged minority groups.

Programs now exist at every level in the school system, from Head Start to the community colleges. However the effectiveness of many of these programs is contested. A study of the career types of this sample suggest that monies for such programs would be best invested during the adult years. Stipends and scholarships or other forms of economic support are necessary for those who are supporting families. Lenient residence requirements, night classes, and short courses all would be attractive to adults who have realized from their work experience the necessity for further training or education.